

Hearings

My Friend Gender

No. One

dedicated to Stephen  
for all your lessons



**My Friend Gender is the first issue of a quarterly 'zine called Bearings. Stayed tuned for more issues to give some bearings on major issues that define contemporary pop and counter culture. Bearings is a collaboration of Count'Our Culture Collective.**

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Mama & Baby



Before she died my great-grandmother told my mother a secret. She told her that she was Choctaw. The Choctaw were a Native American tribe who walked the trail of tears with the Cherokee. Her mother was bought by an Irish fur trader. She was born in a wagon on the way to Oklahoma. They were relocated to Oklahoma then relocated to and assimilated in California. My great-grandmother cleaned houses for white people to take care of her family. It was a bad thing to be a Native American. It still is.

I was home around the same time as Thanksgiving, last year. I believe that my family on my father's side were celebrating said holiday. My father wanted me to be there because he said the holiday meant family. I just happened to have some time off.



Culture can be a crazy thing. My Dad's family works to accept eccentricities. I don't know how many members of my Dad's family knew that Jack was more than just a friend, moreover how many were ignoring the situation. My uncle did no such thing, he bluntly asked what happen to the last boy I had tried to date, four years prior.

So I am sitting there, having some sort of conversation and I hear my grandfather, my father's father, telling my little cousin about why we have thanksgiving.

Granpa:  
blah blah blah  
Plymouth Rock  
blah blah blah  
Columbus  
blah blah blah  
In-jee-ans.



I wanted to get up and say fuck you, I am not an “In-jee-an” and other Native Americans aren’t Indians either, go back to school you fucking bigot.



Happy fucking Thanksgiving, what a twisted holiday. All Thanksgiving is about is the fucking Turkey and eating until you get sick whilst half of the Earth’s population is starving and malnourished.

Three years ago, I went down to California to visit my Grandma, my mother's mother. She is pretty much crazy so it is always an adventure around her. They are going to love her in the olds folk's home. I asked her about her heritage, what my bloodline was. She pondered at me

Why ya want to know a silly thing like that?



When I told her I wanted to know my bloodlines, she told me just to

“Say You're European, you can pass. “



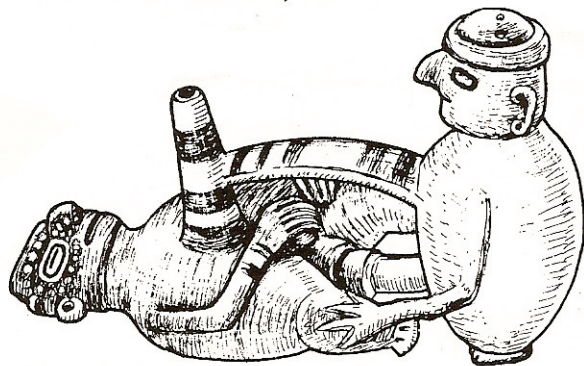
Later on in this conversation she started talking about all her gay friends. I thought cool, crazy lady, but at least she gets that I am queer. I told my mom the story she was surprised and thought it was funny. About six months ago, she was talking with my grandmother, you know, yada yada, and something girlfriend.

My grandmother,  
"her girlfriend?"

My mom  
"Yeah, her girlfriend."  
"She's Gay!"  
"Yeah, I thought you knew that"  
"She's gay."  
"Yeah. You didn't know that?"



11 Many Native Americans Tribes have a gender called a two-spirit or a not-man and not-women. Colonialist called them Berdache, a bastardized word that refers to a man who receives anal sex. Within the Native culture, there are many different ways the cultures view two-spirited individuals. Many tribes honor them as individuals who are not man and not woman, no matter what their biological sex might have been. Some have said that this meant that they were hermaphrodites or intersexed,

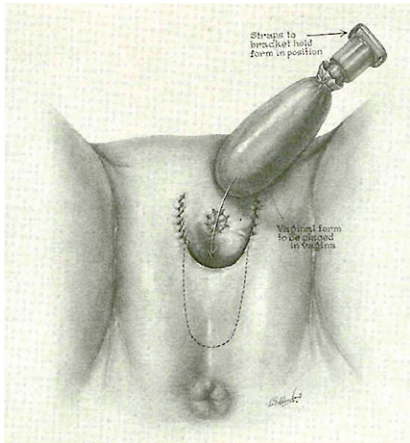


which every you deem as politicaly correct.

Others say that these individuals were what we contemporarily call transgendered or

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through modern surgery



transsexuals.



Still others would argue that they were the first lesbians and gays. Little information is available about how Eastern tribes viewed the idea of two-spirits. Experts claim that it is like trying to determine which plants flourished on the Americas pre-colonization.

Many believe  
this is  
because they  
were hit first  
and therefore  
suffered the  
most from  
colonization.



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Nonetheless, multiple texts describe how most tribes had at least one word to describe an individual

w h o

n o t

gendered.



w a s

m a l e  
or  
f e m a l e

We'wah,  
Zuni Ihamana

Two business suits stare back at me from the Choctaw nation; online. On another story line, I find stories of grandmothers who tell their grandchildren how special they are, how when they were children they had an uncle who was an aunt. I go back to the website of the nation of my relatives. They smile at me and I don't trust what they say.

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They have nothing to say about two-spirits, anyway. So I file through papers stacked into books as I write my own book, my own special book that has the information right there in front of me without the piles of paper filled with words I don't want to read.

The idea which seems most predominant is that two-spirits do not fit into the binary patterns of European colonial thought. Therefore there is no literal translation. Even two-spirit is a rough translation of many words from many tribes.

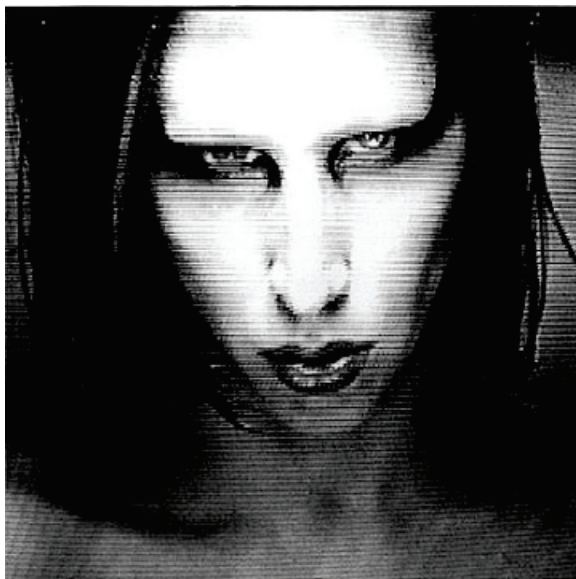
Two-spirits are not binary and are said to perform many duties that were considered male and female as well as duties which were special only to them. Some text calls them prize shamans, being the only spirit that has the ability to cross over to other dimensions, being both masculine and feminine they can transcend during their waking life and don't need to find their other half. As Healers, matchmakers and social workers, they had a strong role in many tribes.

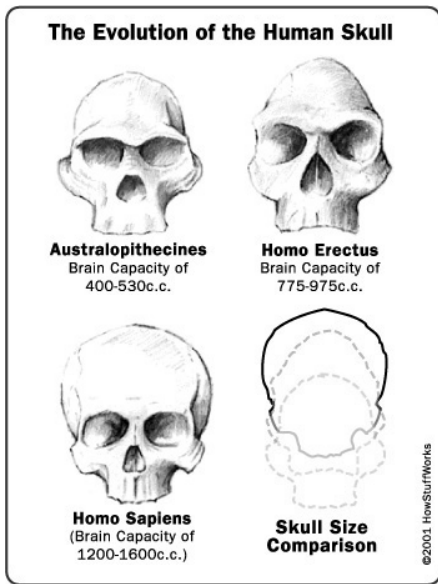
Other functions included the clown, the trickster and the fool. These characters served as an outlet to the population: clowns acting out things that most people are not allowed to do, and therefore relieving them of the burden of those urges. Clowns and tricksters are an integral part of a society. Think of Dennis Rodman, or

Marilyn Manson.



Because  
they  
wear a  
dress,  
and have  
funny  
hair,  
half of  
straight  
America  
doesn't  
have to:  
they are  
relieved  
of that  
urge.





What defines me? I can't stand up and say I am anything, only me. To some, I am young; to some, I am old. Both or neither; weak n/or strong. I am not binary. I am not a computer code. I am an ecosystem. I am a complex life form who comes from a so-called evolved line of Apes.

# Pan paniscus



My closest cousin, the Binobo, has no concept of incest, much less hetero- or homo-sexuality.

Gender is a shade of gray; black being the absence of color and white the refraction.



Ardhanari

Patriarchy suggests that females are only the reflection of males. Embodying only what is not female, indicates the male. By saying one is not female then one must be male. Qualifiers for being female are long hair and tits, and if one gets close enough a cunt. Therefore one is a male if he has short hair, no tits and if one gets close enough a penis.



Ma'am, um... Sir, um... Miss, um... Excuse me,  
what are you... Are you a boy or a girl... oh I'm  
sorry... don't mind her, children will be children.

Contemporary homosexual culture has multiple genders. Of course man and women are generally used to describe heterosexuals. As for homosexuals, there is gay, queer, fag, dyke, butch, lesbian, tranny, ftm, mtf, etcetera, and etcetera. Even for pronoun usage we have he, she as well as ze and s/he. Many GenderQueers choose a letter they feel good about such as R. Usage would be:

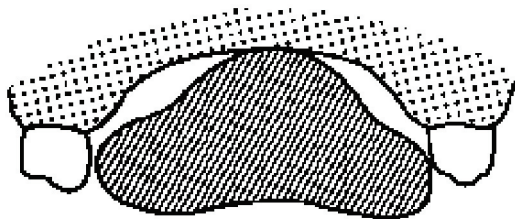
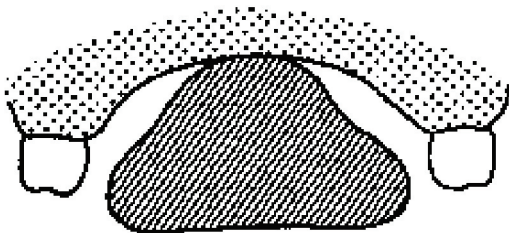
After Sam found r's wallet, r went to the store.



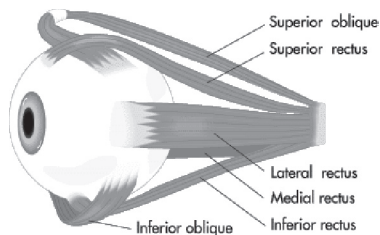
Thus given as many gender possibilities as letters (or combinations of letters) in the alphabet.

I tried to call my partner ze but I have problems saying it. I don't have proper annunciation. My throat opens causing a hard z, which makes ze stand out in a typical sentence structure.

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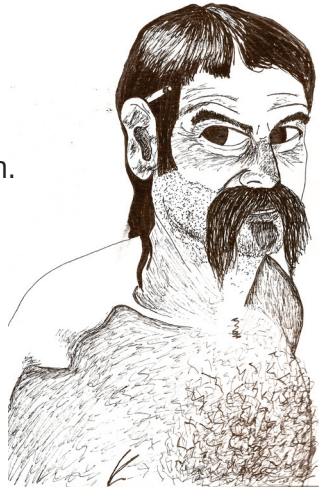


Pronouns are generally unstressed in conversational speaking. They glide out of the mouth and people move on to more important things, like what said person did. The problem with the pronoun ZE is that by its very nature ze is a stressed sound. It is a voiced fricative, which means it is hard and can be quite loud. Try to say a quiet ze. Don't let you neighbor hear it. Now try to say a quiet cee (s/he). This sound is made in a similar manner, but without the voice, which lends itself to something more akin to usual pronoun usage. However, s/he has other problems. It sounds very much like she. Though I like the idea of being someone you s/he and hir.



Somehow, in their own way, my parents allowed for me to deviate from the normal gender roles. Living with only my mom for most of my life, I was the father to cut wood and be the fixer of broken objects. For my weekend father, I was the boy he wanted to have, the best fisherman, winning target practice games. My father understood the literature I gave him on two-spirits; he said

You have always been boyish.



Although, if I was a boy I would wear a long flowing skirt, just because boys in long flowing skirts are hot. Boys with tits are hot too. Can I be a lesbian if I am attracted to gay men and trannies (both ftm and mtf)? Why do I, even in a queer community, continue to try and fit in an arbitrary box called gender and sexuality?

Gender is a construct... Moreover sexuality is a construct...



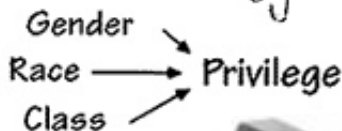
Gender is performative. There is a firm distinction between what is termed sex and gender. Gender roles were implemented for various reasons. The main one being oppression. If men can forget that womyn are no different, then men can dehumanize them. This allows for the domination of womyn. In the terms of patriarchy, 'womyn' are the inferior 'sex' therefore it is 'man's right' to commodify womyn. It also allows for men to disregard or belittle womyn's ability to have major roles within the society or to make decisions that will have an affect on her life, her children's life as well as, perhaps, the lives of other oppressed peoples.



When I was eighteen I had a job as a busser. I never received a promotion. The boss told me I should dress nicer. He required that all the womyn wear skirts. I still looked like a boi in skirts. I think he wanted me to look like a girl. He made me cry once. He told me my dreams were stupid and that I would never amount to anything so I should just find a nice man and start a family. I quit that job when the vegetarian restaurant that I was pestering decided to give me a try. This job forever changed my life. Two strong women own it and it was very empowering to work for two womyn who ran their own business and didn't let anyone step on them.



Thanks  
Tonia  
and  
Sylvia!



What's your social  
economic status?

Since womyn are constructed as the nurturing caregivers this shift could have disastrous implications on the male hierarchy which keeps power, privilege, and money in the hands of white "heterosexual" men

M

(and  
when  
I say  
heterosexual  
I am  
referring  
to the  
performativity  
of  
sexuality).



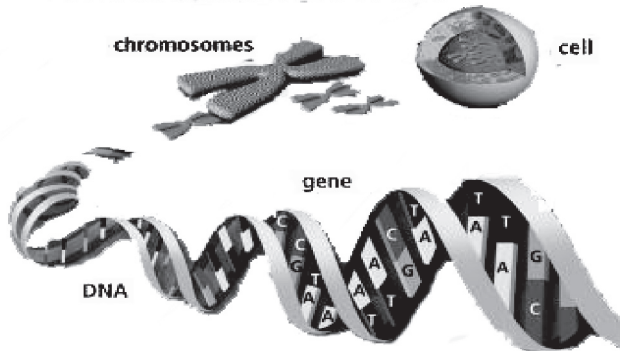
Men can only maintain that power by the oppression of those who are the other, who are different, who can be dehumanized. The performativity of sexuality is inscrutably tied to the performativity of gender. In a "don't ask, don't tell" society; sexuality becomes important only when it is displayed, which generally means not fitting into gender norms.

For example: the flaming male, or the butch dyke, or moreover the trans(gressive) community. This community has suffered the most from binary discrimination patterns. Although it is these groups who have fought the most for gay rights, they are also the first to be disregarded, especially when it comes to passing gay rights laws. These groups are told that they have not been included because activists are working for gay rights not gender variant rights. They are told that they have a choice about the way they act. That they can “pass” if they so choose to. If people can change their gender expression does that not imply that gender is constructed and therefore can be deconstructed.





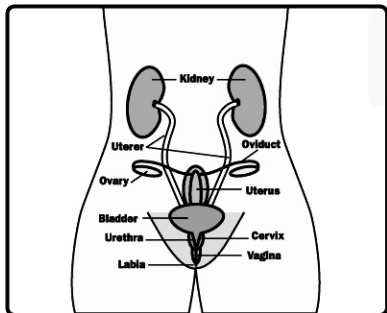
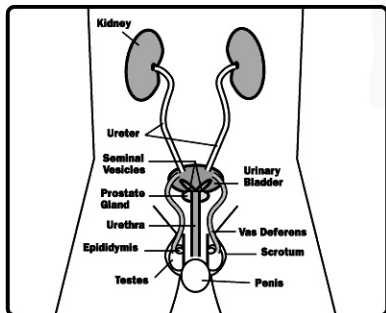
## DNA the Molecule of Life



Isn't a common homophobic attitude  
that people can choose not to be queer?

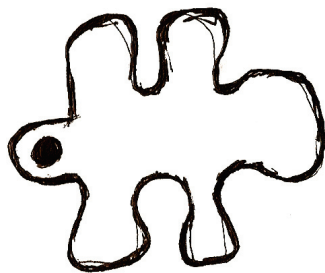
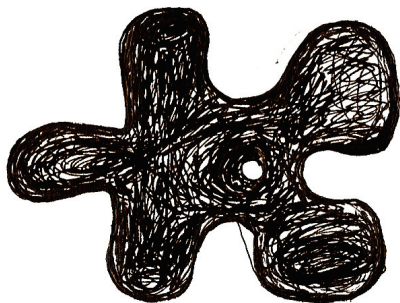
If gender is constructed then where does that leave sex?

Sex is a construct... Mostly because of its need to fit into the binary western logic. In most contemporary cultures there is a man and a woman ,



i.e. the outty and the inny.

My dad once said, "this is the way god made us  
to fit together so that we could make babies."





I realized that without the lower class pumping out babies there would be no working class for the wealthy to take advantage of and the patriarchy would crumble.

It leads one to question the motives behind the christian right's desire to make abortion illegal.

This binary system is not without modern science taking a hand. Four percent of the population is born as what is termed intersexed, or hermaphrodites in the historical sense. Hermaphroditus was the son of Aphrodite and Hermes. One day, the handsome Hermaphroditus was walking by a lake, when the nymph of the lake, Salmacis, fell in love with him and made advances, which Hermaphroditus rebuffed. Yet, the clear water attracted him. He undressed himself and jumped into the lake. Salmacis quickly embraced him. He tried to get away. Salmacis then prayed to the gods. She prayed they should never be separated. The gods granted this wish fusing them into one body.

And to this day we still call those with both  
masculine and feminine biology  
Hermaphrodites in honor of Hermaphroditus.



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According to science whether you are fully intersexed or just have an enlarged clitoris, or a small penis, or are a man with breasts, or if you are a womyn with no breasts you are considered  
**d e f o r m e d , m u t a t e d**





and in order to be healthy and happy in our society, one must only look (and pay) to modern technology to get the quick fix to be able to fit into our binary system.

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Binary is a construct... Binary is a computer code.



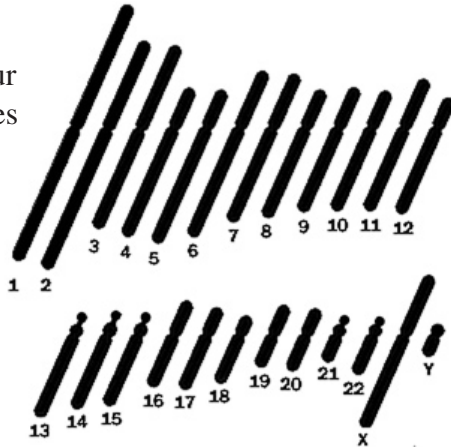
Not a humyn being. Humyn beings come in all different varieties. It's called genetic diversity. It allows for a species to adapt to changes in the environment.



Thank You  
for Gulf War  
Syndrome  
Mr. Bush, Sr!



Hey baby,  
What do your  
chromosomes  
look like?

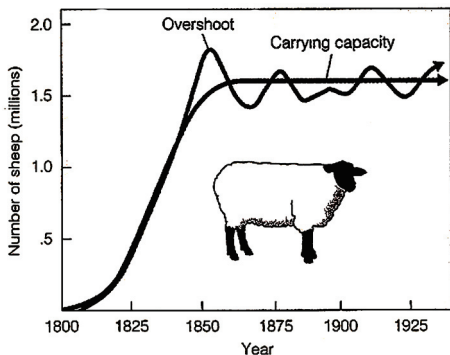


Evolution is achieved through natural selection between genetic traits. Natural selections' other half is mutation, which causes changes in the gene pool that aren't attributable to changes in the natural environment. This creates a game of tag between natural selection and mutation where the word tag would be synonymous with evolution. There is a co-dependence, a mutualistic relationship between the two.

Even this thought pattern is binary,

because many other factors influence the survival of species. Certain kinds of natural disasters can cause a mass extinction of many species on multiple levels of the food web. Because the survival rate of a species depends on its diversity, the homogenization of the species homo sapien sapien will inevitably lead to its extinction.





Which might not be such a bad thing for the rest of the species on this planet. Perhaps within our genetic diversity we could find a niche that was symbiotic to the rest of the earth's global ecosystem. Evolve to become an intersexed being that reproduces only as necessary to keep population stable.

The homo sapien sapien population has an exponential rate of growth, which can be drawn as a parabola. This occurs when a population is not limited by its resources. It is usually followed by a dieback or crash when the ratio of resources to population gets out of balance and the population surpasses its ecosystem's carrying capacity. As a world population, we haven't yet reached a dieback. Scientists theorize that this is due to our ability to extract ever more resources from our environment, therefore unnaturally supporting our population.

This is common knowledge to ecologists. Humans know, and have known, that the Earth has limited resources yet continue to make decisions that disregard any logical science. As I stated earlier capitalism is dependent on the continued population growth and economic support of the lower classes, just as any pyramid scheme. Today, many [queer] people who love each other still can't get married. Is it because they are "evil and god will punish us all if we let them survive and reproduce" or is it because they might not produce as many offspring, therefore not contributing to economic growth?

*I use to not believe in marriage or monogamy so I didn't really care if queers had a right to get married. Then I fell in love and found out that I could be kept from my partner's deathbed based on our assigned sex/genders. The issue got brought home in a real, intense way after I asked hir to marry me. Yet being engaged means nothing to the courts even if you are heterosexual, as one of my best friends' fiancé found out when he died. She had no rights and practically had to beg for some of his ashes from his family. On that day, I learned it is okay to be a boy who cries. He died of a heart attack at age 35 after Bush took office for the second time. He had been organizing the Asian communities in the US. He was one of the only men I ever trusted. He challenged my sexism, which allowed me to realize I am transgendered. I had internalized my sexism too much before to accept it. This is why I choose to dedicate this book to him. out.*



*I  
am  
not  
binary.  
I  
am  
not  
a  
computer  
code  
and  
I  
doubt  
you  
are  
either.*

### **Further Reading:**

- |                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| *Bornstien, Kate       | *Brown, Rebecca    |
| *Feinberg, Leslie      | *Tea, Michelle     |
| *Wilkins, Ricki        | *Pratt, Mini Bruce |
| *Butler, Judith        | *Driskill, Qwo-Li  |
| *Halberstam, Judith    | *Waters, Sarah     |
| *Namaste, Viviane K.   |                    |
| *Fausto-Sterling, Anne |                    |

Editor's Note: This book began as a performance piece which Smitty and I read together. The two fonts are two voices echoing and adding to each other, as in a good discussion. Simple conversation can be the beginning of great changes, go have one.

**Artist Statement:** Bearings is a work in progress that has been placed on the back burner for way to long.

My Friend Gender came from the last year or so of research. There are many people in my life I would like to thank for helping me to understand others, the world, and myself. Although this book is dedicated to Stephen, the first person to really encourage mygender presentation. I wish to also send out a dedication to my button Jack, who has always challenged me, told me what should be obvious as well as give me the space to explore everything on my own. I would also like to thank everyone who has helped me find the person that I am today. Namely: Renne, Jen and Marek. I would also like to thank Gus for the inspiration to look into my internalized sexism. Also thanks to everyone who has been active in the creation of a transgendered culture : all the writer, poets, performance artists, painter, filmmakers. (something about erasure.). Without you all I would have never would have been able to accept my own transgendered presentation.

